

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Elkton School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2002-2003**

Team Members: Rita Pettigrew, Education Specialist, Jan Elsing, Office of Special Education, and Bev Peterson, Transition Liaison Project

Dates of On Site Visit: December 10-11, 2002

Date of Report: December 19, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
--

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources:

- Parent surveys
- Referrals
- Publications of child find notices
- Comprehensive plan
- Yearly child find

- Student Information Management System (SIMS)
- Pre-referral form
- Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) documentation
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs)
- Placement alternatives data
- Disabling conditions data
- Suspension and expulsion information
- Statewide assessment information
- Exiting information
- Workshops and in-services
- AREA training
- Continuing education
- Grants
- Technology for Teaching & Learning (TTL)
- Private school placement data

Promising practice

Elkton School District (ESD) utilizes Teacher Assistance Team (TAT) teams and pre-referral forms and checklists to aid students at risk. The TAT team meets a minimum of two times before a referral is made, unless the need is seen as immediate.

Meets requirements

ESD has in place appropriate procedures for child find for students birth-21. Child find procedures are found on page 12A of the comprehensive plan. This includes procedures, public awareness campaign, documentation, child count and screening. Teachers are given goals, objectives and modifications for all students on IEPs at the beginning of each school year. The elementary principal is responsible for coordinating, implementing, and documenting child find.

Upon receiving a referral, parents are contacted as well as school psychologist and any possible related service individuals. Parents are asked to have input into evaluations they feel are needed for their child as well as all evaluators. After this is completed, parent permission for evaluation is sent to the parents.

A representative is present at all meetings involving students in private schools or facilities. One hundred percent of the files reviewed showed a representative was there. In 2000-01, the district included all students with disabilities in state, district-wide assessments. Based on the data, the district uses decision-making procedures to review and analyze school district data to determine progress toward school performance goals and indicators.

All staff are certified and qualified in their respective educational area.

Needs improvement

Results from teacher's surveys indicate that the district needs to find more time for staff to work together to develop effective educational practices. Eighty-nine percent of the staff indicated they have adequate training, information and materials to allow them to implement student's IEPs. Forty-three percent of the staff indicated they have enough time during the school week to complete necessary tasks to assist students on IEPs.

Also noted from surveys completed by para-educators who work in the area of special services, more opportunities are needed for professional development. Presently, paraprofessionals attend regional in-service, pre-school in-service, reading council, math and reading conferences, and staff development throughout the year.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through the self-assessment process, the district identified the utilization of Teacher Assistance Teams (TAT), pre-referral forms and checklists to aid students at-risk as a promising practice. The monitoring team, through review of files and interview with staff, validates this finding. The TAT meets a minimum of two times before a referral is made to special education. However, if the concerns are seen as in need of immediate referral, evaluations are arranged without TAT involvement. If a referral to special education is made, the observations done as part of the TAT process may become a part of the functional assessment data for the determination of eligibility for special education.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for General Supervision meets requirements.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as needs improvement for General Supervision conclude by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources:

- District instructional staff information
- Suspension and expulsion information
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- Early intervention (Part C)
- Exit information
- Number of students screened
- Preschool age
- School age
- Age at referral
- Personnel development education
- Number of referrals that do not result in evaluation
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Comprehensive plan
- Surveys
- Student information management system
- SIMS report

Meets requirements

Services are provided to identified and eligible children with disabilities. A monitoring system is in place to track suspensions and expulsions for all students. The ESD has not suspended or expelled a student with a disability. The comprehensive plan on page 76 addresses policies and procedures if this were ever to happen. The team meets each spring to determine Extended School Year (ESY) needs on an individual basis. Parents are reimbursed for transportation. Based on the data and comprehensive plan, the ESD has in place policies and procedures that address any suspensions or expulsions.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for General Supervision meets requirements.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:26 Extended School Year (ESY)

Administrative rule requires that ESY be determined by the IEP team. In file reviews and through an interview with the elementary special education teacher, it was indicated that the student's IEP team has not determined services for ESY. Decisions regarding ESY have been determined at a conference with only the parent and special education teacher present. Although the special education teacher was recently made aware of the proper procedure for ESY, time did not allow documentation to reflect the correction.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources:

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT information
- Initial referral
- Parent and teacher report forms
- IEPs
- Surveys
- Permission to evaluate forms
- SIMS report
- Referrals
- Psych reports
- Progress reports
- Report cards
- Exiting information

- Placement by age
- Placement by disabling condition
- Disabling condition

Promising practice

All parents of students with a disabilities receive a multi-disciplinary report.

Meets requirements

Parent consent is obtained before evaluations. Parents are given a parent report to complete and return prior to the meeting. Evaluations are conducted by qualified professionals who assess according to concerns on referral forms. Parents, teachers and related service providers have input into the evaluation process before it begins. One hundred percent of files reviewed showed parental input into the evaluation process. Children are assessed in all areas of the suspected disability as identified during the referral review process and consent by the parent. The completed evaluation report is given to the designee who contacts the parents to schedule a meeting within 30 days of receipt of the evaluation results. When the evaluation team, through initial evaluations, finds an area that needs to be evaluated, the parents are contacted and permission is given to include that evaluation into consideration of special education needs.

Policies and procedures are in place to ensure parent and student rights for evaluation and eligibility for special education. Based on the above data and file reviews, all evaluations were administered on an individual basis taking into consideration all skills. A variety of assessments are used.

Based on files reviewed, the IEP team determines disabilities according to the evaluation findings.

Based on all files reviews, all files show reevaluations completed appropriately with the exception of one student who transferred in on an IEP. In this case, the three year reevaluation period lapsed before an evaluation was completed..

Needs improvement

Functional assessments need to be completed in all areas of suspected disability. Eighty-five percent of the file reviews showed functional evaluations were completed for development of the IEP.

Out of compliance

A student transferred into the ESD on an IEP. The school was unaware of the IEP for two months when they received the information. The student's three year evaluation was not completed within timeframes. The student was assessed with parent permission and is now on an active IEP.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Since the administrative rule requires the IEP team to determine if the student is eligible for special education and provide a copy of the documentation to parents, the provision of the multi-disciplinary report to parents was not validated as a promising practice.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Appropriate Evaluation meets requirements.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the area identified as needs improvement for Appropriate Evaluation concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

Through file reviews, the monitoring team was unable to verify that the issues concluded as out of compliance were systemic. Interviews with staff also supported that they are aware of the process and followed appropriate procedures when students transferred into their district. In the situation noted as a compliance issue, the staff was not provided the necessary information from the parent nor from the forwarding school, which resulted in a lapse in service and timelines not being met.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards
--

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**Data Sources:**

- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parent right document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Public awareness information
- FERPA disclosure
- Complaints data
- Hearings data
- File reviews
- Student files
- School newsletter

Meets requirements

Policies and procedures are in place to deal with due process requests. Parents' rights are given to parents before all meetings. Parents are able to obtain this information in their native language. The ESD has rights available to them in Spanish and English. If a parent needs a different language, every attempt will be made to accommodate their needs including interpreters and written rights in their language. There is now one parent who speaks only Spanish and she was given rights in Spanish. Her child is English proficient. Based on file reviews, parental rights are given to all parents each time they are contacted or attend a meeting. Parents are able to inspect all records.

The elementary principal, following the correct policies and procedures, will appoint surrogate parents. At this time, the ESD does not have any surrogate parents.

Validation Results**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Procedural Safeguards meets requirements.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources:

- Comprehensive plan
- File reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training
- Budget information
- Surveys
- Progress data sheets
- Complaints
- IEPs
- Early intervention (Part C)
- Exit information
- Monitoring

Meets requirements

Teachers are given a copy of modifications pages of students with special needs. Written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes required content. The district has a plan in place to develop, revise and review IEPs. Special education staff has adequate training and certification. Parents are given a copy of the students' IEP. All IEPs are held, at a minimum, annually at ESD. Any IEP may be reviewed or amended at any time with a request from any team member. All students 7-12 are invited and other students are left to the discretion of the parents. ESD invites outside agencies such as: NESC transition specialist, Voc. Rehab, ADVANCE, Career Learning Center and Supported Career Services when appropriate.

Based on file reviews and comprehensive plan, the district consistently ensures all required content is in the IEP. Based on file reviews, all students of transition age are given an interest survey and transition services are addressed individually. Based on file reviews and comprehensive plan, the district consistently ensures all required content is in the IEP. Meetings are held for transition purposes for all students before their third birthday. Each student in the ESD has the same service provider birth through five. Based on file reviews, all students, with exception of one, had an appropriate IEP in place. The student in question has been evaluated and on an active IEP at this time.

Needs improvement

General education teachers at the Junior High and High School are not in attendance at IEP meetings.

Out of compliance

Junior High/High School administrators are not present at all IEP meetings.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Individual Education Program meets requirements.

Needs improvement

Junior High and High School general education teacher's attendance at IEP meetings is a compliance issue (see additional information below).

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)

Individual Education Program (IEP) Team

The monitoring team verified through file reviews that 4 of 10 students' IEPs did not have general Junior High and high school education teachers in attendance at the meeting. In review of administrators at IEP meetings, the monitoring team could not validate that attendance was a systemic concern.

ARSD 24:05:27:13 Modifications to regular vocational program

ARSD 24:05:27:13.02 Transition services

Transition services are a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post-school activities. The coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

The IEP team is required to address a course of study for students age fourteen and up. Student IEPs did not contain an individualized course of study plan for students. The course of study stated only the required courses. It was not being utilized as a planning device to help ensure the students achieved their desired outcomes for employment and independent living. Although transition assessments were conducted with appropriate students, the information was not reflected within the student IEPs present level of performance nor was the information reflected in the five transition planning areas.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources:

- File reviews
- Surveys
- Enrollment information
- Placement alternatives
- Disabling conditions
- Placement by age

- Placement by disabling condition
- Monitoring

Promising practice

Preschool children who have a disability are educated with preschool children who are nondisabled.

Meets requirements

Students with special needs are receiving guided reading instruction with peers. When possible, students are included in classroom activities with assistance. Classroom assignments are modified for students to be successful in the regular classroom. Two students are in alternative placements because of their age and a need for services the school cannot provide for life skills. Each child is removed from the classroom only when all areas have been utilized and the child still does not experience success. Based on the data collected from parent, student and teacher surveys in the IEP process all indicate appropriate steps are taken to ensure students are placed in the least restrictive environment. The Elkton School District provides a preschool program for students with and without disabilities.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Through the self-assessment process, the district identified as a promising practice preschool is offered to both students with and without disabilities. The monitoring team, through interview with staff, validates this finding. The preschool population consists of three children on IEPs and four children who were identified as at-risk via preschool screening, serving a total of seven children at this time. The funds for the preschool are from the general fund.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Least Restrictive Environment meets requirements.